

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q I play a lot of games on my PC and I want to buy a new monitor for this purpose. What should I be looking for?

A Go for a widescreen display, as most new games are written to use their resolutions. Ideally you want to play games at the monitor's native resolution, as this will give you the best image quality. A mid-range graphics card can handle a widescreen resolution of 1,440x900, such as that used by both monitors reviewed this month. High-end cards can handle resolutions up to 1,680x1,050, as found on larger displays such as Samsung's 215TW 21in widescreen LCD (see 'Also consider...').

That said, don't limit the resolution of your monitor to suit your graphics card if you're planning an upgrade soon or you use your PC for other applications and need the extra desktop space.

A high contrast ratio is vital, as you'll get darker blacks and whiter whites. It also helps in games that have scenes of high contrast, such as dank caves lit by torches, as you'll be able to see more of the finer detail. Don't worry about response times, as every new monitor we've seen is more than quick enough to prevent ghosting.

Lynley Oram

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HANNSG HW191D

★★★★

£112 inc VAT

A widescreen monitor is ideal for watching movies, and most modern games are designed for widescreen resolutions. You don't necessarily have to spend a lot on one, either, as HannsG's HW191D and AG Neovo's K-A19 (reviewed right) budget 19in widescreen displays prove. At a little over £100 each, they're both incredibly cheap.

The HW191D's stand is matt black, and the 19in screen is set in a brushed silver surround. It's a lot more stylish than the K-A19. The control buttons are discreetly hidden down the side of the monitor. There are no dedicated controls for brightness and contrast, though, so you'll need to delve into the onscreen menu to make these adjustments.

The monitor isn't height adjustable, although the screen elevation – the distance from the desk to the bottom of the screen – is higher than the K-A19's, at 110mm. This height will be more comfortable for most people to use without having to resort to a monitor stand.

Although it costs £20 less than the K-A19, you get slightly more for your money. The HW191D has a DVI input as well as a VGA connector, and we ran our tests over both. As with the K-A19, the HW191D has a native resolution of 1,440x900.

The contrast ratio is a respectable 700:1; however, this is lower than K-A19's 850:1. There was a noticeable difference when comparing the two screens. Photos with high levels of contrast didn't appear as detailed on the HW191D.

The HW191D fared badly in a number of our other tests. Colours were oversaturated, with brighter hues looking unnatural and skin tones a little sallow. The screen illumination isn't perfectly



even, and the screen is slightly darker around the edges when the screen is filled with a solid block of colour. Fortunately, this is not too distracting and shouldn't cause a big problem in normal use.

The viewing angles, which are quoted as 135° vertical and 150° horizontal, are lower than those on the K-A19, and it shows. Step to the side of this display, and the picture looks darker and image quality deteriorates. It wouldn't be suitable for a viewing audience of more than one person.

The HW191D has built-in stereo 2W speakers. As you'd expect, they're quiet and tinny, and no good for anything but Windows alert sounds. If you want better sound then you'll need to invest in a decent set of stereo speakers.

The HW191D's price is amazing, especially considering that you get DVI and VGA inputs. That said, its image quality didn't quite live up to our expectations, and we'd rather spend an extra £20 on AG Neovo's K-A19 and its superior picture.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Disappointing image quality
- ✗ Poor viewing angles

19in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,440x900, 700:1, 5ms response time, D-sub, DVI
PART CODE HW191D
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.hannsg.com

Also consider...

SAMSUNG 215TW

★★★★★

£343 inc VAT

Samsung's 215TW is a top-quality monitor that's perfectly suited to home and work use. Viewing angles are excellent and the picture quality cannot be faulted. It has a comprehensive range of connections, including S-video, composite, component, DVI and D-sub. There's a picture-in-picture option, too, so you can watch DVDs while you work.

21in LCD 1,680x1,050 resolution, 8ms response time, 1,000:1 contrast ratio, D-sub, DVI, S-video, composite and component inputs
PART CODE SAMQDPWASQ
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.com
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
✓ Excellent picture quality ✗ Pricy
FULL REVIEW Sep 2006



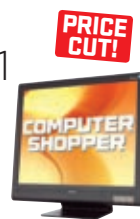
IYYAMA X486S-B1

★★★★★

£189 inc VAT

Iiyama's X486S-B1 is a tastefully designed display. It has a reflective coating, which makes colours look richer and blacks look darker. An ambient light sensor automatically adjusts the monitor's brightness according to the room's light level, while an infrared sensor detects when you're in front of the monitor and turns it off to save power when you're not.

19in LCD 1,280x1,024 resolution, 700:1 contrast ratio, 2ms response time, D-sub, DVI, USB2 port PART CODE X486SB1
SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.co.uk
DETAILS www.iiyama.co.uk
✓ Good picture quality ✗ Auto-brightness feature doesn't work very well
FULL REVIEW Feb 2007



HP LP2065

★★★★★

£304 inc VAT

HP's LP2065 looks classy, with a thin silver bezel and minimalist design. The screen can pivot, there's a four-port USB2 hub built in and it has two DVI inputs. Whites are pure and bright, and high-contrast images are impeccably reproduced. The screen is a little more expensive than most, but it's a price worth paying to get the best image quality.

20in LCD 1,600x1,200 native resolution, 2x DVI inputs, four-port USB2 hub PART CODE EF227AT
SUPPLIER www.pcwb.com
DETAILS www.hp.com/uk
✓ Good design; excellent brightness and contrast; handy USB2 hub
FULL REVIEW Aug 2006



AG NEOVO K-A19

★★★★★

£135 inc VAT



If you're building a computer system on a tight budget, AG Neovo's 19in widescreen K-A19 monitor is a tempting proposition.

While it may not look like much, AG Neovo clearly spent its development money where it counts, as the K-A19 has excellent image quality. Unlike the HannsG HW191D (reviewed left), the K-A19 has only a VGA input. An analogue connection can sometimes be a little less sharp than a digital one; however, the Windows desktop still appeared crisp and sharp at the LCD's native resolution of 1,440x900. Colours were rich and vibrant, too.

Screen illumination was completely even. The viewing angles are 170° vertical and 160° horizontal. Although we've found that the actual experience of sitting in front of a screen can differ a lot from the quoted viewing angles, this was not the case with the K-A19. Moving to the side of the screen saw very little deterioration in the quality of the picture. Two or three people could sit comfortably around this monitor and watch a movie or presentation. The monitor's response time is excellent for the price, and we didn't have any problems with ghosting when playing games or fast-paced movies.

It's a shame that the K-A19 looks as though it was made from the cheapest plastic available. The control buttons on the front look like stickers and are difficult to use. We had to press hard on any of the buttons to activate them, which made it difficult to access



the menu options accurately. Being so heavy-handed with the controls, we'd frequently overshoot the setting or level we were aiming for, which soon became frustrating. Fortunately, you shouldn't have to use the menu often, as the K-A19 has dedicated buttons for contrast and brightness, the most common controls. This makes adjusting the monitor's picture that much easier throughout the day as the light level changes.

The K-A19 cannot be physically adjusted much. There's a little bit of tilt, but the monitor isn't height adjustable. The distance between the bottom of the display and the surface it is sitting on is 80mm. This isn't that high, and most people will find that they'll need to use a monitor stand to raise the display to a comfortable height.

The lack of a digital input is a little disappointing, but otherwise AG Neovo's K-A19 is an excellent display at an amazing price. This is one for all budget buyers.

Lyndon Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good image quality
- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Unattractive design

19in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,440x900, 850:1, 3ms response time (grey-to-grey), D-sub
PART CODE K-A19
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.ag-neovo.co.uk

CHOOSING AN... LCD Monitor

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

IMAGE SIZE: 17in

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 1,280x1,024

INPUTS: VGA

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A basic 17in LCD monitor with the specifications listed above will cost around £95. It will be fine for basic Windows work, but it will have poor viewing angles and colour reproduction won't be very good, so it's not ideal for colour-sensitive work.

2 A VGA input means you'll be able to use the monitor with every PC, but it won't give you as good a picture as with DVI. This digital connection requires a compatible graphics card, but means there are no digital-to-analogue or analogue-to-digital conversions, which reduce the quality of the picture. A DVI connection automatically gets the best picture; you won't have to adjust clock or phase settings as you do with an analogue connection.

3 A 19in monitor will cost around £130 and has the same native resolution as 17in models, but the extra space is easier on the eye. If you want higher resolutions, a 20.1in (from around £190) or larger display will have a native resolution of 1,600x1,200.

A widescreen monitor makes sense if you watch a lot of movies or play games. The budget models come with a resolution of 1,440x900 (from around £110), while the larger more expensive models have a resolution of 1,680x1,050 (from around £220).

4 If you want a better-quality picture, look for a monitor with high contrast ratios. The higher the ratio, the whiter the whites and the blacker the blacks look. In images with high contrast levels, you'll be able to see finer details.

The viewing angles are important as wider angles mean you don't have to sit face on to get the best picture. Wider angles also mean that more people can watch your screen, which is useful if you want to show films.

Fast response times cut down on ghosting. Don't be blinded by the numbers, though, as a response time of 25ms or quicker is fine for all applications.

5 Extras such as speakers and a USB hub can be useful, but don't buy solely for them; monitor speakers tend to be poor, while USB hubs cost only a few pounds.

NEC 175VXM+

★★★★★

£132 inc VAT



If you're building a budget PC, NEC's 175VXM+ 17in LCD is ideal. Its image quality is superb, with bright, rich and natural colours. Viewing angles are poor, but with a screen this size it is unlikely that more than one person will be viewing it at a time.



17in LCD 1,280x1,024 resolution, 500:1 contrast ratio, 8ms response time, D-sub, DVI PART CODE 175VXM+
SUPPLIER www.lambda-tek.com
DETAILS www.nec-display.com/global
✓ Excellent picture quality
✗ Narrow viewing angles
FULL REVIEW Mar 2007

LG 32LC2D

PRICE CUT!

★★★★★

£550 inc VAT



LG's 32LC2D produces beautiful, realistic pictures. Images from our HD movie clips were perfect and the TV displayed every detail flawlessly. Connecting to a PC is easy through D-sub or HDMI and the picture was brilliant. It's excellent value, with a wide range of connections.



32in LCD HD TV VGA, HDMI, component, three SCART, optical S/PDIF, digital tuner PART CODE 32LC2D
SUPPLIER www.empiredirect.co.uk
DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com> ✓ Superb all-round picture quality; good computer display FULL REVIEW Nov 2006

SAMSUNG LE26R74BD

★★★★★

£523 inc VAT

Samsung's LE26R74BD is a stunning TV with image quality to match. It has analogue and digital TV tuners. Quality is best when viewing HD footage over HDMI or D-sub connections. Colours were rich but not oversaturated. This is an impressive HD TV with good all-round quality no matter what device you connect it to.



25in LCD HD TV One D-sub, one HDMI, one component, two SCART PART CODE LE26R74BD
SUPPLIER www.pcwb.com
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
✓ Superb picture quality; stylish FULL REVIEW Nov 2006